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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006980

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ML](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: NRC HEAD ANAND ON HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH MALAYSIAN LEADERS ABOUT SOUTHERN THAILAND

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6639 (B) KUALA LUMPUR 4027 (C) KUALA

LUMPUR 3993

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RALPH BOYCE. REASON: 1.4 (D)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: During his visit to Malaysia last month, National Reconciliation Commission Head (NRC) Anand Panyarachun met with Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi and former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to discuss the Thai-Malaysian relations in context of the ongoing violence in Thailand's southern border provinces. Anand invited Mahathir to visit Thailand on November 21-22. Anand said he was told by Badawi and Mahathir, that during their administrations there has been no Government of Malaysia assistance given to PULO. They told Anand that the brutality inflicted on demonstrators at Tak Bai by Thai security units fuels support for the Malaysian Muslim opposition "PAS" party. Badawi expressed frustration at Thaksin's suspicious attitude towards Malaysia and his public airings of their differences. Amidst the current sour relations between the two governments over the situation in Thailand's south, Anand appears to be working hard to rekindle dialogue between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. End comment.

NCR HEAD CALLS ON BADAWI AND MAHATHIR

[12.](#) (C) National Reconciliation Commission Head (NRC) Anand Panyarachun told the Ambassador on November 3 that during his trip to Kuala Lumpur last month, he met with Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi and former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Anand had told Prime Minister Thaksin beforehand that he planned to visit Malaysia. Thaksin didn't object. Anand went to Kuala Lumpur on October 5-6 as NRC head, not as an official Thai government representative, although the RTG MFA arranged the trip. The meetings with Badawi and Mahathir were in the wake of an acrimonious exchange of words between the two governments following the flight of 131 Thai Muslims to Malaysia in September (reftels). Anand said that he had no specific agenda, but wanted a general discussion on an issue that was causing mutual suspicion between the two governments. Mahathir requested a private meeting with Anand. Prime Minister Badawi was initially accompanied by three aides. Later, Badawi and Anand spoke alone for an hour.

MAHATHIR VISIT INVITATION

[13.](#) (C) During the meeting with Mahathir, Anand extended an invitation to visit Thailand (According to Anand he had come up with idea and told Thaksin about it after the fact. He said Thaksin had no problem with the idea.). Mahathir is scheduled to visit Thailand on November 21-22. Mahathir will have an audience with the King on the 22nd. Anand hoped that a visit by Prime Minister Badawi will follow Mahathir's trip to Thailand.

NO QUESTION OF SEPARATION

[14.](#) (C) According to Anand, Mahathir maintained that there is no question of the southern provinces separating and joining Malaysia. There is no possibility of a referendum to this effect or any possibility of a "decolonization" process. These were "Siamese-Malay" states. Mahathir noted that in the past these state paid tribute to Bangkok in the same manner in which the Thai kingdom paid tribute to the Chinese emperors. The British gave the "Siamese-Malay" states to Bangkok. Now the Malaysian Malays are independent but the Siamese Malays are still under the Thai. The border is fixed and recognized internationally, so there is no question of separation.

[15.](#) (C) However, Anand noted that Mahathir's urging that Bangkok consider a form of autonomy for the deep south provinces was an unfortunate (and potentially incendiary) use of words. Anand said that the Malaysians, nor anyone else for that matter, should not use the term "autonomy." There is no term for that in Thai and it unfortunately translates into the same word as "independent."

OR SUPPORT TO SEPARATISTS

[16.](#) (C) Anand said he was told by Badawi and Mahathir that during their administrations there has been no Government of Malaysia assistance given to PULO. They noted to Anand that

if Kuala Lumpur supported separatism across its border in Thailand, it would give impetus to the separatist-minded living in Sabah or Sarawak. Kuala Lumpur does not want to risk arousing any latent separatist feelings, Mahathir and Badawi said, according to Anand.

HARSH RTG CRACKDOWNS RESONATE IN MALAYSIA

17. (C) The brutality inflicted on the demonstrators at Tak Bai last year by Thai security units was the "last straw" for many Malaysians. This fuels support for "PAS", especially in the provinces bordering Thailand where a network of kinship and other ties exist. If Thailand has its south issues, Kuala Lumpur has its own "north issues," Badawi told Anand.

STRAINS WITH THAKSIN

18. (C) According to Anand, Prime Minister Badawi asked why Thaksin has to publicly air his differences with the Malaysians when quiet diplomacy would be so much more productive. Badawi noted that at the recent meeting of ASEAN leaders with Kofi Annan in New York, Thaksin publicly snubbed him, despite the fact that Badawi was sitting as both the Chairman of the meeting and as head of ASEAN. Anand said that Badawi described to him how Thaksin, followed by Deputy Prime Minister Surikiart and Foreign Minister Kantathi swept past the Malaysian Prime Minister without acknowledging him in front of the assembly. He also noted for example Thaksin's public demand for extradition of a suspected Thai separatist from Malaysia to Thailand last year that put Malaysian authorities in a tough spot.

19. (C) Comment: Anand viewed his visit as successful. He appears to see Thaksin's attitude, born of a personal mistrust of Malaysia, as a major contributor to the current tensions between the two governments. Anand attributes Thaksin's unhelpful stance to Badawi's family lineage to Pattani. Anand clearly sees the Malaysians as an essential component of any long-term resolution to Thailand's southern travails and is working to rekindle dialogue between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. End comment.

BOYCE